

EMERGENCY EGRESS (ESCAPE) WINDOWS

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INTRODUCTION

In July 2000 the Approved Document B (Fire safety) introduced a new concept of Emergency Egress windows to dwellings with an upper floor level of not more than 4.5m. This followed a similar change to the December 1997 amendment to the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations.

EGRESS/ESCAPE WINDOWS

The principal change was the requirement in domestic situations for every habitable room (Apartment in Scotland) to be provided with an Emergency Egress window (Escape window in Scotland). This window must provide:

- **An unobstructed area of at least 0.33m²**
- **A minimum dimension of height and width of 450mm**

The unobstructed route may be angled.

These rules permit the opening to be of any shape provided the minimum dimensions are met.

The BWF interpretation is that:

- To meet the controls a minimum height or width of 450mm will need a minimum alternative dimension of 730mm
- Alternatively, the opening can be 575mm square

INNER ROOMS

In some circumstances where an inner room condition exists on the ground floor or basement an emergency egress window may be required. A door may be used to provide an alternative means of escape and in addition the rule does not apply to kitchens.

HARDWARE

By implication the latching system must not be key lockable. There may also be an alternative requirement for the windows to be fitted with a restrictor to reduce the danger of falling to occupants. In this instance the restrictor will need to be easily operable by adults in an emergency but still be childproof.

GLAZING

If the windows are subject to Secured by Design requirements or other forms of enhanced security and their location in the building provides easy access from the outside, the window may need to be fitted with laminated glass.

Although the windows provide an escape route there would not seem to be a requirement under Building Regulations to fit safety glass unless the glazing area is below 800mm.

GENERAL

The maximum height for the opening above finished floor level is 1100mm. This will inevitably preclude the use of windows which have fixed lights to the lower portion of the frame.

In addition the 450mm minimum width will preclude the use of narrow module window styles unless the design still allows the minimum width to be provided.

The Emergency Access window (850mm high x 500mm wide) is no longer required under the Building Regulations - England and Wales.

However, the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations do still require Emergency Access windows of 850mm x 500mm to floors above 4.5m.